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Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ARA-06 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 INT-05 GSA-01
DODE-00 COME-00 NEA-10 FEA-01 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00
FRB-03 H-01 INR-07 L-03 LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
AID-05 CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-04 ITC-01 TRSE-00 USIA-06
PRS-01 SP-02 OMB-01 /119 W
----------300521Z 027891 /14
R 300245Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5691
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUALA LUMPUR 7521

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EMIN, ITC, MY, BL
SUBJECT: MALAYSIAN PRESS ARTICLE ON BOLIVIAN DECISION NOT TO RATIFY FIFTH TIN AGREEMENT

REF: 76 STATE 309351

1. SUMMARY. DECEMBER 29 ISSUE OF GOM-INFLUENCED BUSINESS TIMES NEWSPAPER CARRIED ARTICLE REPORTING BOLIVIAN DECISION NOT TO RATIFY FIFTH TIN AGREEMENT (FTA) AND CRITICIZING USG POSITION AT DECEMBER ITC MEETING. USG INTRANSIGENCE LAID AT DOOR OF U.S. STEEL INDUSTRY AND U.S. REMINDED THAT IT HAS "A SOCIAL AND MORAL OBLIGATION TO ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE A FIFTH AGREEMENT." THESE OBLIGATIONS WERE NOT FURTHER SPELLED OUT. IT UNCLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT THESE UNSOPHISTICATED
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VIEWS REPRESENT GOM THINKING. EMBASSY WILL CONTACT GOM OFFICIALS PRIOR TO NEXT ITC MEETING TO DETERMINE THEIR VIEWS ON THIS MATTER. END SUMMARY.

2. LEAD ARTICLE IN DECEMBER 29 BUSINESS TIMES GIVES FIRST MALAYSIAN REACTION TO DECEMBER ITC MEETING AND TO POSITION

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USG TOOK IN OPPOSING INCREASES IN FLOOR PRICE. ARTICLE
WAS DERIVED FROM UNSPECIFIED SOURCES IN MALAYSIA'S MINING
INDUSTRY. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, PICTURE EMERGING FROM
ARTICLE CASTS U.S. IN VILLAIN'S ROLE. AFTER LENGTHY BUT
BASICALLY ACCURATE PRESENTATION OF COURSE OF EVENTS LEADING
UP TO FINAL VOTE AND BOLIVIA'S DECISION TO WALK OUT, ARTICLE
SWITCHED TO COVERAGE OF U.S. ROLE IN TALKS. ONE UNNAMED
MINER WHO REPORTEDLY ATTENDED ITC MEETINGS WAS QUOTED AS
SAYING "WE ARE PUZZLED BY THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE AND
INTENTION. ARE THEY OUT TO DESTROY THE ITC? WHAT IS
THEIR REAL MOTIVE?" WHILE THE REPORTER WHO PREPARED THE
ARTICIEL MODESTLY DECLINED TO ANSWER THESE RHETORICAL
QUESTIONS, HE DID STATE THAT "ANOTHER INTERESTING POINT WAS
THAT ALL THE ADVISORS TO THE AMERICAN DELEGATION WERE FROM
THE U.S. STEEL INDUSTRY." THIS WAS INTERPRETED IN LIGHT
OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE U.S. CAN INDUSTRY MAY BE
PLANNING TO USE MORE TINPLATE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS THUS
SOMEHOW CUTTING DOWN ON THE USE OF STEEL IN CANS. ARTICLE
WENT ON TO STATE THAT "PRODUCERS DO NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY
THAT THE BEHAVIOR OF THE AMERICAN DELEGATION WAS DUE TO PRESSURES
FROM THE STEEL INDUSTRY." MINING SOURCES WERE REPORTED
TO "FEEL THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT GIVE THE
IMPRESSION THAT IT IS ALL OUT TO WRECK THE AGREEMENT".
AFTER DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULTIES THAT THE
PRODUCERS WOULD FACE IF THE FTA WAS SCRAPPED (WITH PARTICULAR
EMPHASIS ON DAMAGE MARGINAL MINING OPERATIONS IN MALAYSIA
WOULD SUFFER), THE ARTICLE CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT "THE
CONSUMERS, PARTICULARLY THE U.S., HAVE A SOCIAL AND MORAL
OBLIGATION TO ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE A FIFTH AGREEMENT-
AND TO ENSURE A CONSTANT SUPPLY OF TIN. EXACT NATURE OF THIS
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SOCIAL AND MORAL OBLIGATION WAS NOT FURTHER DEFINED.

3. COMMENT: AT PRESENT TIME, IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL TO
WHAT EXTENT THIS REMARKABLY UNSOPHISTICATED ARTICLE (WHICH
ENTIRELY IGNORES U.S. POSITION THAT PRICE INCREASE UNJUSTIFIED
ON ECONOMIC GROUNDS) REPRESENTS GOM VIEWS ON RECENT ITC MEETING.
AT NO TIME WERE SOURCES IDENTIFIED AS BEING OFFICIAL.
HOWEVER, BUSINESS TIMES HAS CLOSE TIES TO GOM AND IT IS
POSSIBLE THAT MUCH OF INFORMATION IN ARTICLE CAME FROM
GOVERNMENT SOURCES. EMBASSY WILL ATTEMPT TO ASCERTAIN GOM
VIEWS BEFORE JANUARY ITC MEETING.
UNDERHILL

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